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SUBJECT: UNHCR / SAG CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR ANTICIPATED
ZIMBABWE REFUGEE FLOWS

Summary

¶1. UNHCR Regional Representative Mr. Sanda Kimbimbi briefed PolOffs on the UNHCR's Contingency Plan for potential mass refugee flows from Zimbabwe after the June 27 runoff election. The Plan provides for refugee camp sites in South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana, and Zambia to shelter up to 285,000 Zimbabweans (Note: a conservative estimate. End Note), with supplies now being stockpiled in Durban and Dubai. Kimbimbi is confident that the logistical requirements for moving bulk humanitarian supplies overland from Durban or by air from Dubai can be overcome. While upper echelons of host states have been politically wary of discussing refugee scenarios on Zimbabwe, midlevel officials with operational responsibility are fully engaged in preparedness planning. Camp populations of persons displaced by xenophobic violence in South Africa in recent weeks have declined from a peak of 100,000 to a current 15,000, with UNHCR assisting the SAG on enabling re-integration. End Summary.

Plan for 285,000 Persons

¶2. The Contingency Plan that UNHCR has put in place with Zimbabwe's neighbors provides for refugee camp sites near Zimbabwe's border to accommodate up to 285,000 Zimbabweans in four countries -- 100,000 in South Africa; 80,000 each in Mozambique and Botswana; and 25,000 in Zambia. In South Africa, the Plan assumes refugees would cross the border at Beitbridge, advance to Messina for registration and documentation, then proceed to a field site at Artonville now being prepared by UNHCR. (Note: The SAG strenuously avoids the word "camp," so such sites are officially called "centers for safe shelter." End Note) Similar sites are being prepared in Mozambique (at Tete, Manica, and Gaza), Botswana (Francistown / Dukwe), and Zambia (Livingston, Siavunga, and Churundu).

Supply Stocks In Durban

¶3. Supplies for all four target countries are being pre-positioned in Durban. Additional supplies in Dubai can be called upon if necessary. These include a range of nonperishable items to serve 50,000 persons, e.g. blankets, cooking utensils, and 10,000 tents. Inventories should meet the needs of 100,000 persons by mid-July -- with the possible exception of tents, since China embargoed its exports after a recent earthquake. Tents are on order from Pakistan, and

UNHCR is hunting for other UN stockpiles. In short, Kimbimbi feels all is in place to respond if needed. Transport logistics have proven reliable in test runs from Durban -- four days to Mozambique and three days to Botswana, and Zambia a bit longer or perhaps supplied from Tanzania.

SAG Status and Protections

¶4. The UNHCR Plan assumes the SAG would recognize and declare the Zimbabweans as refugees 'en masse,' entitling them to standard protections. The SAG may uphold the principle of free movement, entitling the new arrivals to disperse to cities and townships; or it may restrict their movement so as not to provoke repeats of recent attacks on foreigners. UN conventions would require the SAG to grant refugees the right to work and receive social services -- privileges the UNHCR acknowledges would likely be controversial in the current xenophobic climate. (Note: The SAG political directorate has, in principal, supported such treatment of refugees, but the Department of Home Affairs has been an inefficient means to that end. Moreover, there is less of a grassroots consensus to be so open and welcoming to African refugees, as reflected in the recent xenophobic violence. End Note)

SAG Local Cooperation

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¶5. Kimbimbi said the four receiving states were initially reluctant to discuss contingency planning on Zimbabwe but have since come on board. Hesitation was most marked in the national upper echelons, sensitive to the political ramifications of anticipating meltdown next door. At provincial and local levels, however, there has been more pragmatic traction, among officials who would be held accountable for unpreparedness. The Deputy Director General of SAG's Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and SAG's National Disaster Management Center (NDMC) are both engaged in the Plan, and UNHCR staff toured the planned site with all key SAG departments who committed resources. The UNHCR declined DHA's request to perform site management, preferring that DHA itself assume this responsibility.

IDPs: Return and Reintegration

¶6. Current camp populations of victims displaced by recent xenophobic violence have shrunk markedly from a peak of 100,000 in late May to UNHCR's current estimate of under 15,000. The largest part of the decline was repatriation of about 40,000 Mozambicans. In Gauteng province, IDPs peaked at an estimated 17,500 but are down to 6,500 now; an estimated 7,500 remain in shelters in the Western Cape; and an estimated 600 remain in care in KwaZulu Natal. UNHCR hopes this 'hard core' remainder will continue to decline. The UNHCR last week distributed flyers offering return of citizens to safe countries, but stressing that resettlement to other third countries was not a realistic prospect.

¶7. On behalf of these IDPs, Kimbimbi said the UNHCR has advocated strongly for refugee documentation, regularization of status, and stay of deportation. A project with the DHA to issue a six-month identity card/permit (with security features) to xenophobia victims is due to begin implementation this week. For those IDPs, reintegration is an option, said Kimbimbi, contingent on adequate policing in affected areas, sensitization of local communities, documentation to enable returnees to feel secure, and modest monetary and material assistance. Given SAG reluctance to

set precedents it cannot sustain for future disaster victims,
UNHCR may be called on to provide such aid packages to
xenophobia IDPs.

TEITELBAUM